

Caloosahatchee River Project Prioritization Process
Community Forum #2
Meeting Summary

December 2, 2014

City Pier Building
Fort Myers, FL

Attendees: A list of forum attendees can be found in Appendix A.

I. Overview

This document summarizes a community forum held December 2, 2014 with stakeholders, state and local agencies, and other community participants around efforts to improve the ecological health of the Caloosahatchee River and watershed. The forum provided community members with an opportunity to comment on a set of proposed regional project priorities that have emerged from interagency discussions on water quantity and quality in the Caloosahatchee. The forum also included discussion of strategies to strengthen coordination among stakeholders in the region on local project prioritization, and the focus and structure of future implementer and stakeholder dialogues.

The meeting was facilitated by Mr. Bennett Brooks, Mr. Patrick Field, and Mr. Tobias Berkman from the Consensus Building Institute (CBI).¹

II. Action Items

For the implementing agencies:

- Reflect on the feedback from the forum and meet in late January to develop a final set of priority projects for the region.
- Discuss possible approaches for creating an “issues team” to address local project prioritization, and consider distributing a suggested framework to stakeholders for comment.

For the Consensus Building Institute:

- Develop a Final Report summarizing the implementing agencies’ final recommendations and the ideas discussed during the two community forums and visioning process.

¹ The Consensus Building Institute (CBI) is a non-profit institution that works to improve the way leaders use negotiations to make organizational decisions, achieve agreements, and manage multiparty conflicts and planning efforts (www.cbuilding.org).

For Community Forum participants:

- Send any additional comments on project prioritization, strategies to improve regional coordination, and future implementer and stakeholder dialogues to Phil Flood, SFWMD, at: pflood@sfwmd.gov.

For the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD):

- Reflect on feedback from Community Forum regarding ongoing stakeholder forums and develop an action plan for 2015.
- Post Community Forum meeting summary on SFWMD web page.

III. Introductions and General Overview

Rick Barber, SFWMD Governing Board member, opened the meeting with a brief welcome. Daniel DeLisi, SFWMD chief of staff, then provided context on the meeting and its goals. Mr. DeLisi noted that SFWMD began engaging stakeholders on the future of the Caloosahatchee River about two years ago, and the current meeting was designed to help achieve stakeholder consensus on project prioritization.

Bennett Brooks of the Consensus Building Institute then summarized the goals and agenda for the meeting and put forward ground rules to help keep the conversation on track.²

State Representative Matt Caldwell offered additional introductory remarks, focusing in particular on the upcoming legislative session. Representative Caldwell said that the Florida House of Representatives is poised to make holistic water policy a preeminent goal, noting that the Speaker of the House has put statewide water at the top of his legislative agenda. Legislators are committed to seeing the money from Amendment 1 spent wisely, and are therefore looking for input from stakeholders on their goals and priorities.

Next, Mr. Brooks provided some additional background on the stakeholder engagement process to date. He reported that the process began with a visioning exercise in which CBI interviewed approximately 40 stakeholders on their goals for the future of the Caloosahatchee River and watershed. According to Mr. Brooks, stakeholders expressed a strong interest in improving water quality and quantity, and voiced a powerful sense that a “business as usual” approach would not do enough to achieve these goals. In response, the district embraced a three-pronged strategy involving 1) a scientific workshop on ecological indicators and identification of key knowledge gaps; 2) interagency conversations around project prioritization; and 3) community forums to engage stakeholders and solicit their feedback. The first Community Forum took place August 8, 2014, and

² Mr. Brooks and other speakers used slide presentations to accompany their remarks. The presentations are available online at http://www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xrepository/sfwmd_repository_pdf/caloes_forum_2014_1202_presentations.pdf.

provided community members with an opportunity to offer input on which regional projects they believed were most important. Mr. Brooks reemphasized that the focus for the current meeting was on refining project prioritization (specifically, providing feedback on the implementing agencies' preliminary prioritization), as well as engaging implementers and stakeholders in a discussion around strategies for productively addressing ongoing program and policy issues moving forward.

IV. Topic 1: Developing Regional Priorities

Slide Presentation

Phil Flood of SFWMD presented on the regional project prioritization process to-date and the current categories and rankings of regional projects based on discussions among the implementing agencies. Mr. Flood drew participants' attention to a handout containing a list of regional and local projects and project categories, and noted that SFWMD had created the project list using four sources: the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan, the Caloosahatchee Estuary Basin Management Action Plan, planned local government or water control district projects, and input from community members from the first Community Forum in August.³ Mr. Flood reminded participants that the information on the projects in the handout had come from the individual agencies responsible for implementing the projects.

Mr. Flood noted the project list had been revised to incorporate participants' suggestions from the August Community Forum, and to reflect progress made in conversations among the implementing agencies. Specific changes to the list included:

- Incorporating (as possible) additional information related to ranking criteria, such as water availability for dry-season release, operation and maintenance costs, opportunities for collaboration and linkages across projects, and likely land acquisition costs.
- Including information on the source of nutrient removal data, which in most cases came from the local government or 298 district implementing the project.
- Including additional projects based on suggestions at the August Community Forum.
- Reorganizing the projects into separate tables for regional and local projects.
- Grouping local projects by type and phase, with entries indicating whether the project is a near term or long term project, and whether it focuses on filtermarsh, water storage, environmental restoration, central sewer conversion, or stormwater/drainage.
- Adjusting the ranking criteria based on stakeholder feedback at the August Community Forum meeting.
- Organizing regional projects into four categories: immediate, near-term, conceptual, and restoration. Immediate projects are high-priority projects that are essentially shovel ready, and are either permitted or currently in the design phase. Near-term projects may have an initial

³ The handout is available online at http://www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xrepository/sfwmd_repository_pdf/calooahatchee_projects_list_2014_1121_draft.pdf.

conceptual design or design study, but are not as far along as immediate projects. Conceptual projects are ideas to address needs within the watershed that have not been fleshed out. Restoration projects are efforts that address environmental restoration needs but lack a storage component.

Mr. Flood noted that the implementing group strived to incorporate cost-benefit metrics as recommended at the August Community Forum, but concluded that there was insufficient information available for a meaningful analysis across projects.

Next, Mr. Flood provided background on each of the regional projects on the list. This included four immediate projects:

- *The C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir*: A large reservoir to be constructed in Hendry County, designed to improve salinity in the estuary, attenuate peak water flow during the wet season, and release water during the dry season.
- *Lake Hicpochee North Hydrologic Enhancement*: Hydrological enhancement of a former lake, now a marsh, to provide environmental benefits and improve water quality.
- *C-43 Water Quality Treatment and Demonstration (aka BOMA Property)*: A project involving a number of test plots to examine processes for removing nitrogen from the watershed.
- *Babcock Ranch Preserve Water Storage*: The creation of shallow water storage to capture and store stormwater, and prevent it from flowing into the Caloosahatchee.

The list also included two near-term projects:

- *West Caloosahatchee Water Quality Treatment Area (C-43 Reservoir Site)*: A water quality project to be constructed in conjunction with the C-43 reservoir; Mr. Flood noted that the project still requires a feasibility study.
- *Lake Hicpochee South Project*: A project to rehydrate the south side of Lake Hicpochee; Mr. Flood noted that the effort would revisit an earlier feasibility study to reassess the project's costs and benefits.

The list included nine conceptual projects:

- *Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative*: A study to identify possibilities for storage on existing lands and rehydration of tributaries feeding into Charlotte Harbor; Mr. Flood suggested that a significant amount of land is already in public ownership but additional work is needed to identify key projects.
- *The East Caloosahatchee Storage Project, Caloosahatchee Storage-Additional Project, and C-43 Distributed Reservoirs Project*: Three conceptual projects that came out of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan to address storage needs. All would require feasibility studies.
- *Caloosahatchee Ecoscape Water Quality Treatment Project*: A project to treat water flow before it gets into the Caloosahatchee River.
- *Recyclable Water Containment Areas Project*: A project to periodically rotate agricultural lands

out of production for use as storage.

- *Lee-Charlotte Co. Border Hydrologic Improvement*: A project to try to reestablish flows in the tributaries flowing into the Caloosahatchee, with an opportunity to move waters from one watershed to another depending on conditions.
- *ASR on Public Lands*: A project to develop aquifer storage and retrieval arrays on public properties.
- *Carlos Waterway Conveyance*: A project to take water out of the C-43 reservoir, direct outflows through the Carlos Waterways, and obtain treatment benefits as water flows to the Caloosahatchee.

Lastly, the list included three restoration projects:

- *Tape Grass Plantings Upstream of S-79*: A project to reestablish tape grass upstream to serve as a seed source for the rest of the river.
- *Oxbow Restoration*: A project to restore oxbows and obtain water quality benefits.
- *Tape Grass Plantings Below S-79*: A project to reestablish tape grass meadows below S-79 through plantings.

In response to Mr. Flood's presentation, Community Forum participants asked the following questions and made the following comments; *responses given by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) representatives are indicated in italics*:

- The purchase of private land from interior counties has a negative impact on these counties' economic base, and the government is not doing enough with the large amount of land it already owns. Has the SFWMD done an inventory of how much additional land it is projected to purchase? *SFWMD tries to reach out to communities and accommodate them when it purchases land; it tries to avoid including properties with high commercial development potential in project design.*
- A large percentage of contamination and nutrients comes from septic tanks, and the septic tank situation should be addressed. *Agree that septic tanks are an issue.*
- SFWMD ought to buy more land to the south that flows into the Everglades. The C-43 reservoir will only hold 10% of what is needed during the wet season, and will have a limited impact on attenuating flows. *We recognize there is a gap and more needs to be done, but the SFWMD and others see the C-43 reservoir as an important piece of the solution.*
- SFWMD should offer a presentation on what it learned from the C-43 reservoir test cells, which cost more than \$10 million. *We have made presentations on some of these issues in the past, and it might be a good topic for a future Forum.*
- Does the Ecoscape Project involve land that has already been purchased? *Our understanding is that it involves land located to the west of BOMA property, where a conservation easement has been purchased.*
- In the 80's and 90's the SFWMD made significant investments in sampling and analytical lab methods. Has SFWMD started projects to support cost-benefit metrics? If not, is there an opportunity to list that as an independent project? *We have not done anything we could apply*

to projects across the board. This is something we could talk about and the point is duly noted. It is challenging because projects vary significantly in type and scope, information is developed differently depending on if it's at the local or state level, or information is often not developed at all.

- When building a \$452 million reservoir, it is critical to track the benefits and show it was worth it.

Small Group Discussions and Report-Outs

Participants broke into small groups to discuss regional priority projects. They were asked to address two sets of questions, take notes, and then report their answers to the full group. The questions were as follows:

1. Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?
2. Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?

Comments from the groups' report-backs centered on the following cross-cutting themes described below. Detailed responses from each table (and transcriptions of their notes) are provided in Appendix B.

- There was broad support for the overall project categorization, and general agreement that it effectively reflected the criteria laid out in previous sessions.
- There was broad support for the top tier priority projects, with each small-table discussion group generally agreeing that the suite of projects should be pursued immediately.
- There was general agreement that the list is complete or mostly complete, and no projects should be removed from it.
- There was repeatedly mentioned interest in promoting the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project to the Immediate Priority list, given the benefits of the project and near-term opportunities related to the widening of I-75.
- There was also interest in promoting the West Caloosahatchee Water Quality Treatment Area project to the Immediate Priority list, and combining it with the C-43 West Basin Storage reservoir project.
- There was consistent support for improving cost-benefit data to support future analysis across projects and types of strategies. Participants suggested that cost-benefit metrics may be crucial for tracking and publicizing project successes and securing additional funding.

Other comments included the following:

- There is a need for ongoing monitoring to track project effectiveness.
- There is continued interest from many stakeholders in program/policy actions with impacts beyond the scope of the Caloosahatchee watershed (e.g., increasing environmental flows south, hardening the Herbert Hoover Dike, the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule ("LORS"), and taking advantage of storage opportunities north of Lake Okeechobee).

- The *Vallisneria* restoration south of S-79 should be listed as a higher priority.
- Including “policy” or “operational” aspects in the list could enhance projects and allow for connectability among them.
- It would be helpful to look for recreational opportunities in the projects.
- The C-43 reservoir project is distinct from other projects because it involves a federal funding component.
- Projects that are not “shovel ready” may still merit prioritization.
- Additional land should be purchased south of Lake Okeechobee.
- Some projects should be moved up or added to the list: Restoration of Oxbow 32 could be an Immediate Priority, while the Central Everglades planning project could be added to the near-term project list.
- CRE 126 (Fort Myers-Cape Coral Reclaimed Water Interconnect Project) should be considered a higher priority because there is local funding available.
- Some commenters noted the challenge of how to address sewerage projects, though local, that might have a meaningful positive impact on regional water quality if funded and constructed.
- It is important not to ignore that utilities could become partners and create a larger impact.

A complete list of each group’s comments and transcriptions of their notes on regional priority projects are included in Appendix B.

In the next portion of the meeting, participants discussed how stakeholders might garner support for a package of regional priorities. The following suggestions were put forward:

- It helps to set realistic expectations and quantify the overall benefits.
- It would be helpful to have a breakdown on the time and costs for the design, construction and maintenance phases of each project. This would help stakeholders and decision-makers understand the status of each project, how much each phase will cost, and where the project is going.
- Although analysis is helpful, there also needs to be an effort to galvanize the public around a package of key projects. For example, during the acquisition of Babcock Ranch, there was a sense of urgency and significant media coverage. Similar efforts should be made to rally support for the listing of priority projects.
- Strategies for galvanizing the public include:
 - Creating effective graphics – getting artists involved;
 - Using survey instruments; and
 - Reaching out to citizens and citizen groups to help develop a vision for what the projects are trying to achieve.
- It is important to create a compelling narrative for legislators that shows, in a compelling way, how individual projects are connected to a larger story that “everyone cares about.”

V. Topic 2: Considering Local Projects in a Regional Framework

Slide Presentation

Kurt Harclerode, Natural Resources Division Operations Manager with Lee County presented on the process for identifying and prioritizing among local projects. Mr. Harclerode explained that the interagency team found it difficult to prioritize among local projects given cost-benefit data gaps and inconsistencies across projects, the challenge in weighing local needs and projects against one another, and the need for greater input from and interaction with local municipalities given their central role in implementing local projects. As a result, the agencies did not prioritize among local projects.

However, given the interest among stakeholders and the interagency team in prioritizing among local projects, Mr. Harclerode said the implementing agencies believe there may well be merit in putting together a future process to consider and prioritize among local projects. He explained that the agencies are interested in hearing stakeholder interest in and support for establishing (as is done in the St. Lucie watershed and elsewhere) an “issues team” comprising agency, local government and other stakeholder representatives. Such an issues team would meet annually to hear presentations from local governments about their projects, evaluate them according to a set of articulated criteria, and then deliver to the legislature a list of priority projects for funding. The interagency team felt it would be helpful to hear participants’ input on whether a similar group might be successful in the Caloosahatchee region.

Group Discussion

Mr. Brooks and Mr. Field asked for participant comments on prioritizing and advocating for local projects, and whether there might be interest in forming a team to look at local projects in the region and seek to prioritize them in a convincing way. In response, participants made the following comments and asked the following questions; *comments or responses provided by SFWMD representatives are indicated in italics*:

- The east coast issues team came out of a fish lesion crisis, which galvanized the public. The team looks for projects that have large benefits compared to their costs, that are ready to implement, and that have strong local commitment (i.e. at least a 50% cost share). Since 1979 it has brought in more than \$80 million to the region. It has proven to be an effective tool to put together smaller projects, prioritize them, and make it easier for state representatives to fund them.
- If the community comes together to decide on priority projects, the projects are much more likely to get funded than if multiple projects are competing against each other.
- Has there been opposition to the group on the east coast, such as opposition from local governments to the ranking system? *No. All the counties and agencies are represented at the table. By the time the group comes up with a preferred list, people are generally willing to accept it.*
- What mutual obligations do the stakeholders have? *Once the list is approved, stakeholders advocate for project funding. Once funding is awarded, each entity enters into a separate contract for completing the projects. The program funds projects that are ready for implementation. This ideally means construction begins within a year.*

- The CBIRS (Community Budget Issue Request System) program is another, similar process for managing local prioritization and seeking cooperation around funding. It has been successful in bringing people together and obtaining funding. It includes different ranking categories, such as whether the project is part of a district mission, part of a regional project, within a plan, or ready to implement; how much of a nutrient load reduction the project entails; and whether there is a cost match.
- The CBIRS program offers some parallels to the St. Lucie Issues Team. The program annually solicited funding requests from local governments to implement water related projects. Eligible projects included stormwater, drinking and waste water projects. Local government requests were submitted directly to the Florida Senate and House of Representatives for funding consideration. The funding program has been inactive since FY2008.
- Given the number of competing priorities statewide and the limits on resources, the community in southwest Florida needs to be an advocate for the region and its needs to ensure it is not deprioritized.
- There may be non-cost policy and regulatory opportunities that should be paired with some of these projects.

Mr. Field and Mr. Brooks noted participants' interest into looking more closely at the potential for establishing an issues team for the Caloosahatchee watershed, and suggested that the implementing agencies work on developing a more detailed vision for what such a group might look like.

VI. Moving Forward From Here

Small Group Discussions and Report-Outs

Participants broke into small groups to discuss possible next steps to engage implementers and stakeholders in the Caloosahatchee River watershed. They were asked to address three sets of questions, take notes, and then report their answers to the full group. The sets of questions were as follows:

1. In 2015, what regional conversations about which programs (e.g., dispersed water, land acquisition, agricultural and urban BMPs) could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?
2. In 2015, what regional conversations about policy issues could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?
3. What should our stakeholder engagement look like in 2015?

Detailed responses from each table (and transcriptions of their notes) are provided in Appendix C, but recurring themes reported out following the small-group discussions centered on the following:

- There should be discussion on developing standardized performance metrics (and associated monitoring programs) to track program effectiveness.
- Conversations should encourage a closer look at cost-benefits across projects and programs to guide more rational investments and decision-making.
- There should be cross community conversations (north/south, coastal/rural) to tackle issues that require collaboration and coordination, and to ensure the fair and efficient sharing of costs.
- There should be an effort to improve outreach and educational efforts and materials, and to strengthen the region's awareness of water issues and the "story" of water management.
- There should be an effort to engage far-reaching program and policy issues (e.g., LORS, urban and agricultural BMP effectiveness, water reservations, overall allocation increases to the watershed, septic tank upgrades and remediation, etc.).
- The region should develop strategies to maximize the watershed's benefit from Amendment 1.
- Stakeholder engagement has been helpful, and SFWMD should continue or expand the Community Forums.

Other comments and suggestions included the following:

- Land acquisition may not always be the right solution; there should be a discussion between urban and rural communities about the appropriate amount of land to set aside since rural communities bear the brunt of land acquisition costs.
- There should be discussion of both agricultural *and* urban BMPs, not just the former.
- There should be a standardized performance metric for urban and agricultural BMPs, and true monitoring and data collection.
- There should be discussions on septic tank upgrades and remediation.
- Public education is critical; Riverwatch is a positive example.
- The goal of public engagement should be to get "thousands or millions" of people involved, not just a smaller set of engaged citizens.
- Examples of outreach strategies include farm tours, educational campaigns, factsheets and one-pagers, and press conferences with elected officials "on the water."
- A comprehensive outreach strategy should target 1) counties and the water management district; 2) legislators; and 3) the public.
- There should be improved science discussions between programs.
- The conversation on Amendment 1 is crucial; we should try to develop an overall policy direction and cohesive goal to help us meet our restoration goals.

VI. Conclusion and Next Steps

Mr. Brooks and Mr. DeLisi offered closing remarks. Mr. Brooks invited participants to submit additional comments on index cards at their tables.⁴ He also noted that CBI would be producing a

⁴ Participants' note card comments are included below in Appendix D.
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meeting summary. In late January, the implementing agencies are expected to meet to discuss the feedback from the forum and consider regional priorities. CBI will then produce a final report summarizing the implementing team recommendations and the range of ideas that came out of the broader stakeholder engagement process. In addition, the implementing team will discuss the merits of an Issues team for the west coast, and consider distributing a suggested framework to stakeholders for comment.

Mr. DeLisi thanked participants for attending the meeting, and noted that the SFWMD had heard participants' desire for continued stakeholder dialogue "loud and clear."

Copies of meeting materials and presentations are available at: www.sfwmd.gov/caloosahatchee.

Appendix A – Attendance

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AFFILIATION
ABDUVOHIDOVA	NARGIZA	Riverwatch
BAKER	WILLIAM	MacVicar Consulting
BARLETTO	MISSIE	Glades County/ AIM Engineering
BEEVER	LISA	CHNEP
BOOTH	AMANDA	USGS
BOYLE	MICHAEL	City of LaBelle
CALDWELL	MATT	State Representative
CAPECE	JOHN	Riverwatch
CEILLEY	DAVID	Johnson Engineering
COOK	MICHAEL	ECWCD
CORNELL	BRAD	Audubon Florida/Audubon West Everglades
DAVIS	STEVE	Everglades Foundation
ECKERT	TIM	Lee Country Farm Bureau
ELLIOTT	REBECCA	FDACS/OAWP
ENGLISH	HUGH	
EVANS	JAMES	City of Sanibel
FORDHAM	GEORGE	Fordham Engineering
GILLIS	CHAD	News Press
HAMEL	RON	Gulf Citrus Growers
HAMMAN	BRIAN	Lee County BOCC
HARCLERODE	KURT	Lee County
HECKER	JENNIFER	Conservancy of Southwest Florida
HENNE	CARTER	Sea & Shoreline
IGLEHART	JON	FDEP
JARVIS	CONNIE	City of Cape Coral
KEYES	PAM	Lee County
LAAKKONEN	KEITH	Town of Fort Myers Beach
LASSO DE LA VEGA	ERNESTO	LCHCD
LEOPOLDINE	MATTHEW	Riverwatch
LIDDICK	DREW	FGCU
LINDSAY	DAVID	ECWCD
LOPEZ	JOSE "PEPE"	US Sugar Corporation
MAXWELL	LIBBY	FL Legislature District 55
MCAVOY	GENE	UF/IFAS
MILLAR	PAUL	Lee County
NEUROHR	JULIE	FDEP
O'NAN	KELLY	Hendry County
OTT	JUDY	CHNEP
OTTOLINI	ROLAND	Lee County DNR
PALMER	JOYCE	Ding Darling NWR
PARKER	SHANE	Hendry County
PAUL	JOHN	Jack Paul Properties
PEARSON	JEFF	City of Cape Coral
QUASIUS	PETE	Audubon of the Western Everglades

QUINCEY	IRENE	Pavese Law Firm
SCOTT	RUTH	Clean Water Initiative of FL
SENTES	STEVE	SFWMD
STONEHOUSE	MARC	CDM Smith
TYSON	DEBBIE	Gunster Law Firm
WESSEL	RAE ANN	SCCF
WOLF PELAEZ	BONNIE	FDACS

Appendix B – Small Group Discussion Notes on Regional Priority Projects

Group 1:

Comments to larger group

- The project grouping is appropriate in terms of the criteria laid out in previous sessions, but we are still lacking metrics. We would like to see cost-benefit metrics that would enable a more concise ranking of the projects on the list.
- The C-43 reservoir and BOMA projects are the two projects within the top category that should be worked on as soon as possible.
- There is a need to scatter distributed water storage and BMPs across the region, but we need effective cost-benefit metrics to accurately evaluate the benefits of those programs.
- The Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project should be moved forward as an immediate priority project
- The *Vallisneria* restoration south of S-79 should also be listed as a higher priority.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?*
 - C-43 problematic – federal interest to make it difficult to implement
 - Number 1 is unique because it has a federal component – makes project component – needs to be in its own category
 - BOMA looks good because budget is manageable
 - Some of the more regional projects may have a bigger impact
 - Land acquisition is a big piece for keeping landowners on their lands rather than state owned pieces
 - Dispersed water projects
 - Keeping C-43 on top to keep it on federal funding list
- *Question 2: Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?*
 - None

Group 2:

Comments to larger group

- The projects are categorized properly.
- CRE 13 could be moved up and combined with the C-43 reservoir as an immediate priority project
- The list is likely to be helpful for lawmakers going to funding sources.
- It is helpful to separate regional vs. local projects.
- It would be helpful to see a target performance metric to be able to quantify project accomplishments after construction, so the public can see the benefit of their money being spent.
- Including “policy” or “operational” aspects in the list could enhance projects and allow for connectability among them.
- It would be helpful to look for recreational opportunities in the projects.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?*
 - For funding sources, the list is a great prioritized list for leaders to know where allocation should be focused
 - Regional vs. local breakdown for budgeting of state vs. local
 - Bridging the gap of governmental concern and public noticeability
 - Consensus between local municipalities
 - Project and policies/operational
 - Include measuring/document progress of policies and operational changes
 - Connectability
 - Target performance to quantify accomplishments (post construction)
 - Metric
 - Public benefit
- *Question 2: Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?*
 - CRE13 – combine with CRE-W Res
 - Same property
 - More bang for the buck
 - Recreational opportunities – aspect on projects
 - Status update on Charlotte Flatwoods land acquisition

Group 3:

Comments to larger group

- The C-43 reservoir project might deserve its own category, because of the federal funding component.
- We ranked the BOMA and Hicpochee projects as the second and third top priorities (following C-43).
- There are no projects missing from the list.
- Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods could benefit from being categorized as a higher priority.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?*
 - Yes – appropriately grouped in terms laid out in past sessions
 - Still lacking metrics/cost-benefit
 - C-43/BOMA
 - Bonnie reviewed process by which projects were grouped/prioritized
 - Brad Cornell – We do not have metrics to adequately judge projects.
 - John Capece agreed on need for development of metrics as we move forward for better evaluation of projects in the future.
 - Marc Stonehouse – Could money be better used to move lower rated projects forward? C-43 construction costs are considerable.
 - Brad Cornell – C-43 provides major immediate impact

- Agreement that distributed water storage on private lands needs to be scaled up – as there is interest by private landowners
- Marc/Bonnie – are there other sources of funding?
- Brad – Need to address shortcomings identified in distributed water storage and potential seems to be there but need to look at cost/benefit analysis
- Marc – Which project is most ready is really only one factor that should be considered.
- *Question 2: Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?*
 - Need to scale up distributed water storage/BMPs but need to develop cost benefit metrics to evaluate benefit and impacts
 - Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods (Bond Ranch) – seek ways to move this forward
 - Vallisneria restoration south of lock S-79

Group 4:

Comments to larger group

- The first grouping of four projects is well placed and we are supportive of them.
- The water quality component of adjacent lands should be moved forward in the timeline, to take advantage of land already owned by the state and allow for additional stormwater treatment next to the reservoir site.
- The biggest advantage of the reservoir is the metering of water back out to the estuary during the dry season. That is 80% of the need.
- The Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project should be “front-burnered” because of the I-75 road widening. An opportunity could be lost in the next few weeks if we do not try to buy that project immediately. The project is relatively inexpensive but has multiple benefits: it reduces excess flows to the Caloosahatchee, mitigates flooding, restores habitat, and restores flows to Charlotte Harbor.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?*
 - Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods needs to be front-burnered due to I-75 road widening and available FDOT mitigation property acquisition in jeopardy. FWCC has potential construction money. \$4M reduces flooding and excess flows to CRE.
 - C-43 Reservoir – 170,000 ACFT storage is not a static number. Great addition would be some stormwater treatment adjacent to project site. Best advantage of project would be dry season flows (80% of needs met) Lee County advocates \$300M for construction of first cell
 - Lake Hicpochee – big bang for buck, habitat restoration, etc.
 - BOMA – move it forward
 - Babcock/Four Corners – multiple partners good chance for FDACS to showcase work
- *Question 2: Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?*
 - No

Group 5:

Comments to larger group

- There aren't any projects that should be taken off the list.
- "Shovel ready" might not be the best criterion: stimulus projects might not be shovel ready but still should not be taken off the list.
- The conceptual projects are well placed. The Charlotte Harbor project is very important but we would not replace any of the projects in the top list.
- At the last Forum, there was a discussion of hardening the Herbert Hoover Dike, which would allow flexibility in release discussions. This appears to be missing from the list.
- It is hard to rank projects involving nutrient removal and estimated storage without data and metrics.
- There might be opportunities to get more details on ASR projects, but we didn't add this to the list because we did not think it would be worth taking money from other projects.
- Storage north of Lake Okeechobee might help prevent water getting into the lake to begin with.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?*
 - C-43 – is this project actually "shovel ready"? Need to define "immediate" Same with BOMA.
 - Disconnect between project list and governing board list (Sept. 3 '14)
 - Babcock – need to check with FDACS
 - Metrics; cost: benefit
- *Question 2: Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?*
 - Herbert Hoover Dike replacement – expedite culvert replacements to provide flexibility in holding water – alleviate releases, therefore reducing nutrient loading
 - Storage north and south of Lake Okeechobee
 - More details on ASR – how much water will it store? Need more details to prioritize this project.

Group 6:

Comments to larger group

- The immediate priorities are appropriate.
- One individual in the group was in favor of changing the order of prioritization but the others preferred the existing order.
- Some group members supported adding the purchase of 50,000 acres south of Lake Okeechobee to foster sending excess flows south.
- There was some discussion of removing the C-43 Reservoir from the list entirely and replacing it with the southern flow way, and changing the Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule.
- Several participants were in favor of returning the Berry Grove (C-43 Reservoir site) property to private ownership and using revenue to purchase land south of Lake Okeechobee.
- Restoration of Oxbow 32 might be added to the immediate projects list.

- We could add the Central Everglades Planning Project to the near-term projects list, subject to receipt of chiefs' report and permitting.
- There has been no discussion of the Army Corp's work restoring Herbert Hoover Dike. The Corp spent a significant amount on the initial miles of restoration. Instead of fortifying the dike to raise the water level and destroying the wetlands around the lake, the Corps should prioritize construction of a spillway on the southern portion of the dike to allow water to flow towards Everglades National Park.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?*
 - Immediate priorities – OK
 - Discussed change in order – one in favor
 - Add purchase of 50,000 acres south of Lake Okeechobee for southern flow way
 - Add restoration of Oxbow #32
 - New idea – Remove C-43 Reservoir from list and replace it with Southern Flow Way from Lake Okeechobee and Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule changes to achieve water quality + meet MFL requirements for Caloosahatchee River. Return Berry Groves to private ownership and use revenue to purchase land south of Lake Okeechobee.
 - Near term
 - Add Central Everglades Planning Project subject to the Chief's Report + Permitting
- *Question 2: Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?*
 - CEPP
 - Southern Flow Way

Group 7:

Comments to larger group

- We agreed with the projects as listed; they are appropriately categorized and prioritized, and we did not see key regional projects missing from the list.
- The group did not agree CRE 126 should be on long-term project list. It should be a high priority since the local government has funding. If SFWMD partnered with local governments it could redirect thousands of gallons as reclaimed water. There is money at the local level to build a pipeline across the river; money is needed to upgrade the south Ft. Myers wastewater treatment plant. The project would have a significant return on investment, and would have a far-reaching regional impact.
- There is a concern that if all water management district funding goes to a few projects, this will ignore local utilities that could become partners and create a larger impact.
- The group is strongly supportive of the C-43 reservoir project, and does not see this as negating the need for a flow way south. The two are equally important.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?*

- We agreed with projects listed generally.... Our group does not agree that CRE 126 should be on long-term list. Should be high-priority for regional near-term list since local government has funding – if SFWMD partnered with local governments, could redirect billions of gallons of nutrient-rich wastewater from Caloosahatchee River to be used as reclaimed water. Just need to update City of Ft. Myers/Lee Co. South wastewater treatment plant to reclaimed water treatment standards. Estimated total cost for that and Cape Coral to hook in is \$20M – so big bang for the buck from a water quality/nutrient reduction perspective. It would be regional in our opinion since it would have far-reaching positive impacts to whole estuary – not local...local government trying to help pay but need state cost-sharing to get done and crosses municipalities (City of Ft. Myers and Cape Coral).
- *Question 2: Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?*
 - No

Group 8:

Comments to larger group

- The projects are categorized correctly, and for the most part prioritized appropriately.
- There was a discussion about whether the utilities aspect of sewer projects could be connected with other projects to have a larger area impact.
- The group also discussed whether there could be a water quality component to the storage projects, especially the C-43 projects.
- The group had concerns around the outcome of the tape grass studies project.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: Are projects appropriately categorized? Are they appropriately prioritized?*
 - [Blank]
- *Question 2: Are there any key regional projects still missing from the list?*
 - Yes, they are appropriately categorized and yes they are appropriately prioritized (for the most part), though a discussion was raised pertaining to utilities (sewer projects)
 - Concerns pertaining to near term projects (locally):
 - Central sewer expansion projects – could they be tagged with other projects to gain a large area as opposed to being so centralized?
 - Regional restoration projects:
 - Tape grass studies – water quality and quantity effects from Lake Okeechobee on the projects
 - Water quality component to all water storage projects (reference to C-43 projects)

Appendix C: Small Group Discussion Notes on Moving Forward From Here

Group 1:

Comments to larger group

- We discussed land acquisition and agreed it is not always a solution to the region's needs.
- With Amendment 1 we need to consider cost management. It may be more efficient to keep land in private hands or to use the land currently in the public domain more effectively.
- We should look at urban BMPs and not just agricultural BMPs – these have been avoided due to cost.
- We need a discussion around education, such as through the work of Riverwatch, and to encourage public discussion and acknowledgement of shared responsibility for these issues.
- We talked about approaches to reach the broader public, for example through groups doing farm tours; we acknowledged that the real question is how to get hundreds of thousands or millions of people involved, and not just a smaller set of engaged citizens.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: In 2015, what regional conversations about which programs (e.g., dispersed water, land acquisition, agricultural and urban BMPs) could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, and focus)?*
 - How much landscape is appropriate for water quality improvements? How do we compensate rural communities for environmental services and the implications on their tax base in regard for providing services to their citizens and loss of development rights?
 - Dispersed water management is important to preserve agriculture and to help alleviate pressure from water coming from the north in the Kissimmee River Basin
 - We discussed participating in a statewide water plan to look at how entering the system from the north impacts our area
- *Question 2: In 2015, what regional conversations about policy issues could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?*
 - [Blank]
- *Question 3: What should our stakeholder engagement look like in 2015?*
 - [Blank]

Group 2:

Comments to larger group

- Question 1:
 - There should be a discussion about a standardized performance metric for urban and

agricultural BMPs. There should be a common standard and incentives for BMP participation in all basins.

- There should be discussions on septic tank upgrades and remediation.
- There should be discussions on cost effectiveness between regional programs and targeted lands where storage is needed within specific basins.
- There should be discussions on cost sharing between coastal and inland communities.
- Question 2: There should be a regional partnership discussing specific water issues collectively.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: In 2015, what regional conversations about which programs (e.g., dispersed water, land acquisition, agricultural and urban BMPs) could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, and focus)?*
 - Metric for agriculture/urban BMP's standardization and performance
 - Incentives for BMP participation within specific basins
 - Tangible measurements for performance evaluation
 - Septic tank retrofit/upgrades
 - Cost effectiveness
 - Targeted lands where storage is needed
 - Cost share between coastal vs. inland
- *Question 2: In 2015, what regional conversations about policy issues could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?*
 - Regional partnership (ag, environmental, local & state municipalities, public), collectively discussing water
- *Question 3: What should our stakeholder engagement look like in 2015?*
 - Issues team

Group 3:

Comments to larger group

- There should be a discussion between urban and rural communities about the appropriate amount of land to set aside.
- There should be a discussion with communities to the north about water coming down into our region during the wet season.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: In 2015, what regional conversations about which programs (e.g., dispersed water, land acquisition, agricultural and urban BMPs) could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, and focus)?*

- Land acquisition – not always the solution – need to consider cost of management
- All projects have operating cost component
- Need to seek opportunities to establish income streams to support land maintenance on public land
- Land acquisition has had negative impacts on small inland counties where large parcels of land have been pulled off the tax rolls
- Focus on agricultural BMPs; urban BMPs have been avoided due to costs
- *Question 2: In 2015, what regional conversations about policy issues could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?*
 - Education and outreach in an appropriate setting (Riverwatch)
 - Need to publicly discuss – lead toward a discussion/acknowledgement of mutual/shared responsibility vs. finger pointing
 - More public outreach – tours/farm tours
- *Question 3: What should our stakeholder engagement look like in 2015?*
 - Engage leadership groups
 - How do we reach the masses
 - Example of how to do things right

Group 4:

Comments to larger group

- We would like to see a three-pronged outreach campaign involving: 1) work with counties and the water management district; 2) work with legislators; and 3) work with the public to galvanize support.
- It may be helpful to talk about the economics of restoration by putting a dollar value on the impact of an unrestored ecosystem on various industries, such as agriculture, fishing, and tourism.
- Factsheets or a series of one-page talking points might be helpful.
- It is key to champion our successes, for example through press conferences with elected officials “on the water.”
- For stakeholder engagement in 2015, Amendment 1 is huge. How is the money going to be spent? What can it do?
- We discussed Lake Okeechobee’s regulation schedule and building in additional flexibility without damaging the ecosystem.
- One way to advocate for more funding may be to coordinate better with Charlotte Harbor NEP to obtain untapped federal funds.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: In 2015, what regional conversations about which programs (e.g., dispersed water, land acquisition, agricultural and urban BMPs) could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be*

structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, and focus)?

- Three phase education:
 - County and SFWMD (WRAC and GB)
 - Legislature
 - Public
- Once project list is done and prioritized
- Hendry, Collier + Lee Leg. Delegations coming up soon – need to move Amendment 1 forward with these and other legislative reps
- Give same message to all legislators
- White paper local governments participated in went to legislators with list of projects
- Celebrate/showcase successes
 - Ag
- Fact sheets unified talking points
- Champion our successes
- Common consensus
- Press conference with elected officials
- Flexibility on lake schedule, storage north of lake
- *Question 2: In 2015, what regional conversations about policy issues could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?*
 - Amendment 1
 - Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule flexibility storage north of the lake
 - RESTORE Program – eventually funds will filter down to CRE
 - Better coordination with Charlotte Harbor NEP – fed dollars and RESTORE
 - Economic impacts
- *Question 3: What should our stakeholder engagement look like in 2015?*
 - [Blank]

Group 5:

Comments to larger group

- Both septic tank remediation and real monitoring of BMPs need additional regional discussion.
- We would like to see stakeholder meetings continue.
- Public support is crucial to seeing issues advance.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: In 2015, what regional conversations about which programs (e.g., dispersed water, land acquisition, agricultural and urban BMPs) could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, and focus)?*

- Program – septic tank remediation
 - Wide spread issue that is being/needs to be addressed locally – need regional funding?
 - Understand the impacts of septic to the river
- Education
- *Question 2: In 2015, what regional conversations about policy issues could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?*
 - [Blank]
- *Question 3: What should our stakeholder engagement look like in 2015?*
 - Public support
 - Continued stakeholder meetings to follow up on project implementation/status

Group 6:

Comments to larger group

- Question 1: Regional conversations in 2015 should involve improving the science discussion between programs, working to understand collectively how to achieve the goals of the program, and thinking about how each program fits into the larger picture of creating a water budget.
- Question 2: We should utilize discussions on how Amendment 1 will be implemented as part of an overall policy direction with a cohesive goal.
- Question 3: We should put together an appointed committee similar to the St. Lucie Issues Team.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: In 2015, what regional conversations about which programs (e.g., dispersed water, land acquisition, agricultural and urban BMPs) could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, and focus)?*
 - Improve the science discussions between these programs – better the science for BMAPS, BMPs, TMDLs, etc.
 - We need to understand collectively how we are achieving the goals of these programs and how each fits into the bigger picture. Create a water budget overall.
- *Question 2: In 2015, what regional conversations about policy issues could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?*
 - Utilize discussions of how Amendment 1 will be implemented to create an overall policy direction that gives a cohesive goal.
- *Question 3: What should our stakeholder engagement look like in 2015?*

- Put together and appointed committee – similar to the ISSUES team.

Group 7:

Comments to larger group

- True monitoring and data collection is needed to know the actual benefit of BMPs, dispersed water management, and other programs, and to know where to make additional investments.
- It is important to grow and allocate water supply for all users, including the environment. We should consider metering agricultural water use to know the true usage levels, and set up water reservations to know environmental water needs.
- For future stakeholder engagement, meetings should be more frequent, less constrained, more expansive, and more results oriented. Conversations should identify policy changes, not just projects.

Transcription of notes

- *Question 1: In 2015, what regional conversations about which programs (e.g., dispersed water, land acquisition, agricultural and urban BMPs) could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, and focus)?*
 - No assumptions or self-reporting and monitoring. Need real data/monitoring to know true level of benefit of each BMP, dispersed water management, etc. to know where added investment should be made to result in real improvement (rather than paper improvements).
- *Question 2: In 2015, what regional conversations about policy issues could help advance relationship building, and program effectiveness and efficiency? How might these conversations be structured to yield constructive dialogue and productive outcomes (e.g., conversation participants, timeframe, focus)?*
 - Growing and allocating water supply for all users – including the environment! Meter agricultural water use like in SWFWMD to know true use and set water reservations to know true environmental water needs. Need comprehensive water budget made public.
- *Question 3: What should our stakeholder engagement look like in 2015?*
 - More frequent, less constrained, more expansive and results-oriented to identify and implement needed policy changes to improve stormwater treatment, wetlands preservation, operational Lake Okeechobee allocations/releases policy, etc. Projects are half of the equation. Policy is the other half.... Can't stop now without that being fully fleshed out and addressed.

Group 8:

Comments to larger group

- A conversation needs to take place on Amendment 1. Florida Forever Program funding is likely to be restructured, and we want it to be restructured in a way that allows us to meet our

restoration goals in southwest Florida and take advantage of the opportunity for land acquisition.

Transcription of notes

- [Blank]

Appendix D: Transcription of Participants' Note Card Comments

Thank you to all involved stakeholders for all the collaboration efforts and attempting to chip away at the problem.

1) First half was very productive regarding regional projects. Latter half was not productive. 2) Interesting to see how some individuals are interested in pet projects that are not of regional nature and can be handled/should be handled locally within the municipality.

Bond Ranch Acquisition is a high priority in Charlotte harbor Flatwoods project. It's shovel-ready and the deal is needed now.

– Need to avoid fixation on a popular issue i.e. southern flow way, which may not be immediately possible due to a number of constraints including impact of Lake O poor quality water on the Everglades. – Need to be science-based solutions

Celebrate successes & present unified vision – create folder of “glossy” fact sheets of successful past and priority future projects and print and distribute to forum stakeholders and local representatives to share with legislators and other funding sources

Passage of Amendment 1 will probably lead to a restructuring of Florida Forever. *How do we reach our restoration goals through this restructure and not lose the opportunity to attract funding to protect and restore the Caloosahatchee basin.